

DANIEL J. EVANS  
WASHINGTON

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

697 U.S. Courthouse  
West 920 Riverside  
Spokane, Washington 99201

May 29, 1987

Mr. Robie Russell  
Regional Administrator  
Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Sixth Avenue  
Seattle, Washington 98101

Dear Robie:

As you are aware, the contaminated area of the Colbert landfill in Spokane County has been the source of much contention and litigation over the past two years. The site currently is listed as a Superfund cleanup site.

The attached news article indicates that reports and recommendations are now coming as to what can and should be done to clean up the area. Regrettably, there is a great deal of concern as to the proper steps to be taken. More importantly, there is more concern over the lack of adequate time to comment on the plan.

Hopefully you will agree that three weeks is not a great deal of time for the people in the area to assess the full impact of the plant and that it would be reasonable to allow another 60 day extension for additional public comment and review of the proposal. I hope that your agency can see fit to grant this extension. I view it as adding public confidence to the process as well as ensuring that the best possible plan for cleanup will evolve. Please note that the Department of Ecology officials as well as Spokane County officials also concur in this. A grant of this extension of time would be extremely helpful in solving this problem.

Best regards,

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*Bud Pardini*  
A. J. "Bud" Pardini  
Eastern Washington Director

USEPA SF



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# Work won't lower wells, experts say

By Jim Camden  
Staff writer

A \$9.6 million proposal to clean contaminated ground water in Colbert won't lower wells or flood the Little Spokane River, consultants for a state Department of Ecology study said Thursday night.

The cleanup proposal would put some chemical pollutants into the air — but not enough to create a health problem, the consultants and department officials told about 200 people who crowded into the Colbert Elementary School gym.

"It's not that we don't believe you," said Craig Costello, a Colbert area resident whose water supply has been contaminated, "but what's going to happen if you're wrong?"

Other residents had expressed fears — which officials had tried to allay — that the proposal would not draw down the water level in nearby wells, or pump so much water into the river that it could overrun its banks during the spring.

The prime alternative in the study calls for wells to be drilled into the contaminated aquifers; water to be pumped into towers in which air will strip out the contaminants; and the cleaned water to be discharged into the river.

"If the (cleanup) system is designed properly, it should have minimum impact on the (aquifer) system," Douglas Morell, project manager for Golder Associates, which helped write the study.

But if problems arise, the amount of water being pumped and cleaned could be cut back, to even out the flow, department officials said.

"The water is flowing toward the river right now," said Kenneth Johnson of EnviroSphere Co., another consultant on the study. "Overall, the effect will be very little on the Little Spokane River."

In some areas, wells a short distance away will see slight changes in water levels, Johnson said. But in other areas, the effect will be "virtually zero" because the aquifer is so active.

The department is proposing the system as a way to clean up ground water contaminated by chemicals

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## Wells

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dumped in the Colbert landfill. Four of the six most serious chemicals are thought to be linked to solvents placed in the landfill in the late 1970s by Key Tronic Corp.

Wells would be drilled into the aquifers south of the landfill, to head off the flow of contaminated ground water that will eventually reach the Little Spokane if it goes unchecked.

Other systems also were considered in the feasibility study — an 8-inch-thick report released earlier this month — but are rated as less desirable because they provide less protection to public health or the environment, or are more expensive.

The proposed system wouldn't eliminate the chemicals from the water, but would make it safe enough to drink under federal

standards. The aeration towers would put the chemicals into the air, but they should disperse quickly to minimize any dangers, Johnson said.

The study will undergo further review by county, state and federal officials. Ecology Department officials addressed one complaint at the beginning of the meeting when they announced local residents would have until June 30 to comment on the plan.

When the study was released, comments were due by next Friday.

Some Key Tronic employees said their company is getting an unfair portion of the blame for contamination that results from many chemicals dumped into the landfill during the 18 years it was operated by Spokane County. At least two of the

chemicals were not dumped by the keyboard manufacturer.

"It's likely there were many other contributors (to the pollution)" Ed Sonderman said. "What is the Department of Ecology doing to identify some of those other contributors?"

Fred Gardner, the department's project manager for the Colbert cleanup, said some chemicals may be traced to Fairchild Air Force Base, which also used the dump. But pinning down responsibility for other chemicals is difficult because the records are incomplete, he said.

"It would require quite a bit of detective work," Gardner said.

Under federal law, companies responsible for the contamination can be required to share in the costs of the cleanup.